

The Apprentice Beekeeper

The Apprentice Beekeeper is the first level of certification in the Oregon Master Beekeeper Program. This level is designed to give those just starting in beekeeping solid information and support, with the goal of increasing retention of new beekeepers as they develop confidence in their ability to keep bees. Those with existing beekeeping experience may also benefit from the additional training and system for measuring their progress. The training, experience, and guidance provided at the Apprentice Beekeeper level provide the student with:

- The knowledge and confidence to keep bees
- Hands-on experience working with bees, including use of tools and equipment
- Information about the costs and “how-tos” of obtaining bees to get started as a beekeeper
- Opportunities for training and mentorship
- Exposure to resources to improve skills and stay current in beekeeping

Participation Criteria

Enrollment in the Oregon Master Beekeeper Program at the Apprentice Beekeeper level begins with submission a completed application form. A student’s acceptance to the program depends on the availability of mentors. The student will be notified when a match with a mentor is made. At that time, the student needs to submit a \$100 fee. Upon receipt of the fee, the student will receive the approved text and other related forms and materials. A minimum of one year is required to satisfy certification requirements.

The student does not need to own bees while completing the Apprentice Beekeeper program, but he or she is encouraged to do so. If the student does not have a colony, his or her mentor will assist in finding a colony for the student to use. The Master Beekeeper Committee will also be available to assist in such situations.

Certification Requirements

To be certified as an Apprentice Beekeeper the student needs to satisfy the following requirements:

1. Pass a written **exam** based on *First Lessons in Beekeeping* and supplemental materials provided with a score of 90% or better.
2. Submit a **log** with a **minimum of 4 entries** regarding colony-management activities that cover 12 consecutive months.
3. Earn **6 education points** and submit an Education Point Worksheet detailing how the education points were earned.
4. Earn **4 field experience points** (one per season) and submit 4 Field Experience Checklists that have been checked off by a mentor.

Textbook

First Lessons in Beekeeping by Keith Delaplane is the textbook used for the first level of certification in the program. The book will be sent to the student on acceptance into the program. A resource list with suggested organizations, reading materials, and websites will be provided also. Students are encouraged to read widely in honey bee literature and journals.

Written Exam

The written exam covers the 8 chapters in *First Lessons in Beekeeping* and additional specified supplemental materials. It may be taken at any time while meeting requirements for certification. The exam is open book and not timed. For questions with more than one part, each part of the question's answer is assigned one (1) point; e.g., a question asking for two (2) examples is assigned two points. If the passing grade of 90% is not obtained, the student may take the exam again after 30 days.

Classroom Training

Classroom training is included in the Apprentice Beekeeper application fee. The classroom training is optional, but highly recommended. Oregon Master Beekeeper instructors will offer classes throughout the state, as well as during regional and statewide meetings and conferences. Schedules for classes held throughout the state will be posted on the Oregon Master Beekeeper website (www.oregonmasterbeekeeper.org), the OSBA website (www.orsba.org), and in the OSBA newsletter, *The Bee Line*.

Log of Colony-Management Activity

Students will maintain a log documenting observations and managing procedures every time they work a colony of bees. This could be their own hive, the colony they work with their mentor, or any other hive they are allowed access to. Ideally the log covers 12 consecutive months, at a minimum one entry a season for four consecutive seasons. There are numerous ways to document maintenance activities. Although the student will choose the format for the log, the log should document specific information that includes the following:

- Date and time of day
- Weather conditions
- Observations: e.g., brood pattern, bees bringing in pollen
- Notes of actions taken: e.g., mite counts, medications given, and feeding (what and how)
- Notes about what needs to be checked, considered, or brought for the next visit
- Notes of anything unusual or unexpected: e.g., too many drones, aggressive bees, and so forth
- Questions to consider, research, or ask of mentor

The student is encouraged to bring his/her log to each meeting with the mentor to provide an opportunity for the mentor to review the log and provide additional guidance. The log needs to be submitted as part of program requirements. It will not be graded, but it will be checked for completion by an instructor or other Oregon Master Beekeeper Program committee member.

Mentors can assist with suggestions and examples of log entries. Students who are technologically inclined may keep a log online with Hive Tracks (www.hivetracks.com). Records from Hive Tracks may be printed out and submitted with other completed materials when applying for Apprentice Beekeeper certification.

Education Points (6)

Education points are earned by attending educational events such as Oregon Master Beekeeper classes, local bee schools, beekeeper conferences, and field days in which one learns through observation rather than through actually working colonies. Education points are assigned based on the number of hours dedicated to the activity.

- 1 (one) point is assigned for educational activities of four hours or less
- 2 (two) points are assigned for an educational activity that exceeds four hours in a day

Examples of bee-related activities that qualify for education points are as follows:

- Bee Schools
- Field days
- Workshops
- Beekeeper conferences
- Bee club meetings with a presentation on a bee-related topic
- Master Beekeeper workshops

It is the responsibility of the student to record his/her time involved in activities that qualify for education points to meet this requirement of the program. We encourage students to take notes about the educational events in their log. An Education Point Worksheet is included in this packet.

The completed Education Point Worksheet must be submitted with other materials when applying for certification.

Field Experience Points (4)

Field experience is active, hands-on experience working with bees, hives, and beekeeping equipment. The student demonstrates the ability to perform specific hands-on manipulation activities on his or her own under the supervision of a mentor.

These activities are organized by beekeeping season and documented on the Field Experience Checklist. During each season, the student meets with a mentor at least once to work through the minimum hive activities listed on the checklist. The checklist may contain required discussion topics or optional, but suggested topics. If the student does not have prior experience, the mentor will demonstrate an activity and then the student will be expected to perform the activity independently.

One point is assigned to each season's Field Experience Checklist. A total of 4 field experience points are necessary to meet the Field Experience requirement for the Apprentice Beekeeper certification. Students are encouraged to meet with their mentors more than once per season; repetition and the opportunity to ask questions and cover additional material reinforces learning and builds confidence.

The 4 completed Field Experience Checklists must be submitted with other completed materials when applying for certification. Copies of the Field Experience Checklists are included in this packet. The required activities per season are listed, as follows:

Spring

- Smoker operation and use
- Beekeeper behavior when approaching a colony
- Tool identification and use
- Recognizing drones, workers, and queen
- Recognizing pollen, honey, and brood in comb
- Basic hive evaluation
- Feeding and/or recognizing starvation
- Mite monitoring

Summer

- Supering: when, how many, which type
- Colony management during honey flow
- Honey harvest
- Extracting, bottling, and storing honey
- Storing honey supers
- Providing water for bees (discussion)
- Queen excluders (discussion)
- Nectar dearth and robbing (discussion)

Fall

- Hive evaluation: queen, food stores, and disease
- Continued mite monitoring with sticky boards, sugar roll
- Entrance reducers and mouse guards
- Feeding
- Recognizing and addressing small and light colonies
- Fall treatment options (discussion)
- Nectar dearth and robbing (discussion)
- Mean bees! (discussion)

Winter

- Feeding and/or recognizing starvation (late winter)

- Checking overwintering hive(s)
- Learning about equipment: needs, terminology, sources